

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
OFFICE OF MARINE SAFETY
WASHINGTON, D.C.

- - - - - X
:
SELENDANG AYU :
:
INTERVIEW OF USCG RESCUE :
SWIMMER AARON BEAN :
:
:
- - - - - X

An interview in the above entitled matter was held
on Sunday, December 12, 2004, commencing at 2:20 p.m.,
before:

MARIETTE BURER, NTSB
RODDY CORR, USCG

P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 OPERATOR: Yes, Ms. Burer. How are you?

3 MS. BURER: I'm doing okay. Actually, where we
4 left off, at least as far as my last entry, my notes are
5 concerned, is when Mr. Bean was talking about ready status at
6 Cold Bay, so if you can take it from that point forward, that
7 would be great.

8 MR. BEAN: Yes ma'am. We stayed there overnight in
9 Cold Bay on ready status. We were -- we were waiting at 7:45
10 the next morning and we were told that the Selendang Ayu was
11 no longer in tow and that we needed to go and respond from
12 Dutch Harbor. So the helicopter crew got in the airplane at
13 6 o'clock that morning and took off en-route to Dutch Harbor.
14 When we got to Dutch Harbor, we -- we shut down the
15 helicopter and we were again just standby and on a ready
16 status and we were ready on deck at -- at -- at Dutch Harbor
17 for a little over an hour. We had about enough time to get
18 lunch.

19 MS. BURER: Okay.

20 MR. BEAN: Where -- before District 17 air station
21 Kodiak called us and they wanted us to respond to the
22 Selendang Ayu by delivering 26 survival suits to their crew
23 via the Coast Guard Cutter Alex Haley. We were going to get
24 the survival suit from Alex Haley and put them on the
25 Selendang Ayu. And so -- that -- when we got the word, that

1 is when we got airborne en-route to their position. Once on
2 scene, Coast Guard cutter Alex Haley again told us to stand
3 by and we stayed in the area while the Alex Haley made an
4 attempt to pass the hawser -- to pass another towline across
5 to Selendang Ayu and the -- when the hawser broke, the
6 Selendang Ayu went ahead and lowered their starboard anchor.
7 They had already their port anchor out and we witnessed them
8 lower their starboard anchor and the anchor took. It moved
9 the Selendang Ayu into the seas, made it much -- much more
10 stable and we were looking at it as a better platform to work
11 from. I don't know where the decision was made -- not - not
12 to deliver survival suits. It was -- it was -- that
13 decision-making process was -- was beyond me, but we -- we
14 were then briefed to start hoisting the survivors off of the
15 vessel. We --

16 MS. BURER: Can you -- excuse me. Can you speak up
17 just a little bit or get closer to the phone?

18 MR. BEAN: Yes, ma'am.

19 MS. BURER: Thank you.

20 MR. BEAN: The decision was made to get the
21 survivors off the vessel and our helicopter crew moved into
22 position over the portside (Indiscernible) area of the
23 Selendang Ayu and lowered the basket onto the deck. We
24 waited for survivors to get in the basket one by one and as
25 they got into the helicopter we had -- we had pre-briefed we

1 were going to do three sorties. We were going to get nine
2 people, then another nine people, and then eight people. And
3 we completed the first sortie by taking the nine people that
4 we had hoisted off the Selendang Ayu and we lowered them down
5 to the Coast Guard cutter Alex Haley. During that time there
6 was another H60 helicopter that had done the second sortie.
7 They had gotten nine more survivors off the Selendang Ayu and
8 had them inside the helicopter.

9 And I don't know where this decision was made. It
10 was -- it was outside of my decision-making abilities, but
11 somebody made the choice that we were going to take the nine
12 survivors to Dutch Harbor. So we were going to split the
13 group up and it made more sense for our helicopter, the 60-
14 20, the mishap helicopter, to return to Dutch Harbor because
15 we had -- we had a little bit less time, we had less fuel, so
16 we could, we could return while the other helicopter could
17 stay out longer. So what we did was, both helicopters did
18 rough area landings on the nearby beach. All nine survivors
19 switched helicopters and we took the nine survivors back to
20 Dutch Harbor and met them with customs agents there at the
21 airport.

22 Again, we got another call from District-17
23 operations here at Kodiak that they said they needed us out
24 there again. So we did our crew brief and we got airborne
25 again from Dutch Harbor en-route to the Selendang Ayu. And

1 once on scene, there was the H60 helicopter, the other H60
2 helicopter had returned to Dutch Harbor -- or to Cold Bay,
3 they returned to base and we now had an H65 Dolphin
4 helicopter on scene which was deployed to the back of Coast
5 Guard cutter Alex Haley.

6 Along with that helicopter, there was a small float
7 helicopter on scene, okay -- and again we just did our crew
8 brief and moved into the same hoisting positions at the other
9 survivors were hoisted from and there were eight survivors on
10 the deck waiting to be evacuated. When we lowered the basket
11 onto the ship's deck, none of the survivors approached the
12 basket. Eight survivors stood there and -- and -- and I
13 would -- what I would say they panicked. That's when our
14 Aircraft Commander said to put the rescue swimmer down. I
15 went ahead and I got into basket and was lowered down to the
16 port side forecastle of the Selendang Ayu and I just held
17 hands with each survivor as I put him inside of the basket
18 and they were hoisted up to the helicopter.

19 MS. BURER: Okay. Are you still there?

20 MR. BEAN: Yes ma'am.

21 MS. BURER: Okay. So you got all the survivors or
22 part -- continue on with your story.

23 MR. BEAN: Yes ma'am. We did bring seven survivors
24 into the cabin of the mishap helicopter, leaving myself and
25 the master of the vessel onboard the deck and that's when the

1 apparent lost the power and the aircraft mishap occurred and
2 then the master of the vessel and I were left on scene. The
3 H65 overhead was immediately responding to the -- the
4 helicopter crash in the ocean by lowering their rescue basket
5 into the water and bringing up survivors from the plane
6 crash.

7 MS. BURER: Okay. So the H65 they lowered -- are
8 you still there?

9 MR. BEAN: Yes ma'am.

10 MS. BURER: Okay. Okay because it seems almost
11 like you are kind of breaking in and out.

12 MR. BEAN: I am here.

13 MS. BURER: Okay. So you were telling me about the
14 65 immediately went into the search and rescue mode and
15 that's where, that's the last thing I have.

16 MR. BEAN: I was still on the vessel with the
17 master. That's when I began to notice that my safety and the
18 master of the vessel's safety were -- could have been in
19 jeopardy. I heard alarms on the ship going off. I asked the
20 master of the vessel what, what the alarms indicated and he
21 had told me that there were compartments on the vessel that
22 were flooding and I requested to know from the master what
23 would be the safest place for us to be, you know, outside of
24 those flooding compartments obviously and the master was --
25 he was a little panicked and as was I -- so I asked him if

1 had communications, any radio devices, and he handed me a
2 hand-held radio and I radioed the Coast Guard cutter Alex
3 Haley requesting to know, you know, where would be the safest
4 place to be on that vessel.

5 MS. BURER: Right.

6 MR. BEAN: Taking on water and Alex Haley told me
7 that they couldn't -- they couldn't advise me of that -- that
8 position. They were well off in a distance so they, they
9 couldn't have really seen where I was or what really had
10 happened and the master of the vessel and I just together we
11 formulated that we were going to stay together and we moved
12 into a sheltered area of the bow it was just very-very little
13 bit of shelter, we were still very much exposed on the bow of
14 the vessel, but we had the part of the ship overhead and we
15 had you know bulkheads to hold onto the overhead with a lower
16 there, so we were -- we were hunkered down and we were making
17 radio calls back and forth between the Coast Guard cutter
18 Alex Haley and Selendang Ayu.

19 MS. BURER: Okay.

20 MR. BEAN: Cutter Alex Haley had told us that crew
21 members from the helicopter had survived and that one person
22 was critically injured and they were returning to Dutch
23 Harbor and I understood and the master of the vessel and I,
24 we just -- we just hunkered down where we were.

25 MS. BURER: Right.

1 MR. BEAN: I -- I began to ask the master, you
2 know, pertinent questions about his ship and about the
3 condition of his ship and questions like: Are the anchors
4 holding? Is the ship aground? Will -- will the anchors
5 continue to hold? Will the ship stay on -- on the ground or
6 on the rocks and what would happen if they didn't? I asked
7 him where his survival suits were. I asked him about his
8 life -- life raft. And on and on I asked him what his kids
9 wanted for Christmas, where he was from -- I -- I was on the
10 vessel with the master of the ship for nearly two hours.

11 MS. BURER: Okay.

12 OPERATOR: Do you have another question?

13 MS. BURER: No, I am actually listening to what he
14 is saying, but it is just like what I was saying earlier just
15 keeps interrupting. So the last thing that I had was two
16 hours that he was with the captain.

17 MR. BEAN: It was an estimated time.

18 MS. BURER: Right.

19 MR. BEAN: I lost track of time. It was -- it was
20 nearly two hours.

21 MS. BURER: Right.

22 MR. BEAN: I had made an attempt to secure a life
23 raft. There was a life raft on the deck of the ship where we
24 were standing. It was -- it was getting hit by waves coming
25 over the bow and we were washed down the deck and I climbed

1 out onto the decks where the life raft was and I grabbed the
2 line that was tethered to the deck -- or tethered to the life
3 raft and I tied it to the deck underneath the bow area where
4 we were standing and held onto the life raft preparing to
5 abandon ship possibly.

6 MS. BURER: Right.

7 MR. BEAN: Whilst the waves kept crashing over the
8 side of the vessel and sometime during the night, the tether,
9 the line that I had tethered between myself and the life
10 raft, had parted and we had lost the life raft. Shortly
11 after the vessel itself had parted in two and we had the
12 Coast Guard cutter Alex Haley hail all rescuers in towards
13 our position. There were several tugs they tried to move
14 into position. There were HC130s overhead that were I think
15 responding to another search and rescue case and they again
16 radioed the H65 crew back in Dutch Harbor. So we -- again we
17 were just communicating about every 10 minutes over a hand-
18 held radio.

19 The master of the vessel and I were communicating
20 with the Coast Guard cutter Alex Haley and again later on
21 sometime in the night the H65 crew radioed me and they told
22 me that they were going to come in at a very high hover and
23 attempt to lower the basket and I told them that sounded like
24 a great plan and they made several attempts before they said,
25 they requested of us that we moved aft on the ship as forward

1 or as aft as we could and so we transited the decks pretty
2 much until -- until the edge of the ship and that's where we
3 waited for the H65 to put their basket down on the deck, they
4 did, I loaded up the master of the vessel into the basket and
5 he was hoisted to safety and the H65 crew made several more
6 attempts to put the basket down for me and they did and I was
7 hoisted to safety where -- and that's where we did -- we did
8 a two shoreline searches of the area and then returned to
9 Dutch Harbor.

10 MS. BURER: Okay. Do you remember -- let me see --
11 do you remember what time it was when you were going from air
12 Kodiak to deliver the 26 emergency suits? Approximately what
13 time of the day it was?

14 MR. BEAN: I think that we were in Dutch Harbor
15 probably from between the hours of 11:00 and 12:30. We might
16 have had an hour and a half on deck. So we took off at -- at
17 12:30 to the Selendang Ayu with the intentions of delivering
18 the survival suits.

19 MS. BURER: Okay.

20 MR. BEAN: 12:30.

21 MS. BURER: Okay. But you are not really sure as
22 -- are you still there?

23 MR. BEAN: Yes ma'am.

24 MS. BURER: Okay. But you are not really sure why
25 the decision of not delivering the emergency suit was made?

1 Correct?

2 MR. BEAN: No.

3 MS. BURER: Okay.

4 MR. CORR: Oh yeah, can I interject?

5 MS. BURER: Yep. Go ahead.

6 MR. CORR: (Indiscernible) Were the survival suits
7 actually loaded in Dutch Harbor?

8 MR. BEAN: Negative. Sir, the survival suits were
9 onboard the Coast Guard cutter Alex Haley.

10 OPERATOR: Is this Mr. Corr?

11 MR. CORR: Yes, it is.

12 OPERATOR: Okay.

13 MS. BURER: Okay. As far as your -- may I call you
14 Aaron?

15 MR. BEAN: Yes, ma'am.

16 MS. BURER: Okay, Aaron, as far as your location to
17 the vessel, do you know exactly how high you guys were
18 hovering or an estimate, a good estimate, and why did you
19 choose that particular site?

20 MR. BEAN: I will start with the first part of your
21 question.

22 MS. BURER: Okay.

23 MR. BEAN: Normally in the situation where we hoist
24 to a vessel that's dead in the water we do 40 to 50 foot
25 hover over the vessel.

1 MS. BURER: Okay.

2 MR. BEAN: And those -- those are all pilot
3 decisions. I don't pilot the aircraft, so they were in
4 control there.

5 MS. BURER: Okay.

6 MR. BEAN: We chose the area on the -- on the port
7 side of forecastle because when the Selendang Ayu had lowered
8 their starboard anchor that had made that area the most
9 secure and it was free from you know large cranes, you know,
10 the things that the helicopter could -- could get tangled up
11 with.

12 MS. BURER: Okay. Okay. As far as the actual
13 location when you guys lowered the basket, where exactly was
14 the basket? Was it on the vessel or was it outside and then
15 someone holding it by the rail?

16 MR. BEAN: It was lowered right onto the deck of
17 the ship.

18 MS. BURER: Okay, and is that a normal procedure or
19 what did --

20 MR. BEAN: Yes, ma'am. The Coast Guard has several
21 different ways of delivering its rescue basket and that is a
22 normal -- it's a direct basket to the ship's deck, that's the
23 normal procedure.

24 MS. BURER: Okay. Did you have any communications
25 with the crew then when you were trying to guide them into

1 the basket or how did that come about?

2 MR. BEAN: No, ma'am. We did not have radio
3 communications with crew on the Selendang Ayu. We had
4 visual, you know they could see us, we could see them, but no
5 verbal communication.

6 MS. BURER: Okay.

7 MR. BEAN: Motioning the survivors toward the
8 basket with hand motions and gestures to get in the basket,
9 but we didn't have any radio communication.

10 MS. BURER: Okay. And if I understand this
11 correctly, the first two, you were not actually lowered, it
12 was with the third pickup right, that you were then lowered
13 in to guide them?

14 MR. BEAN: Yes ma'am.

15 MS. BURER: Is there any particular reason or why
16 you think that happened, because they, I am sure, already had
17 witnessed the first two going off the vessel.

18 MR. BEAN: Yes ma'am. The only reason why I was
19 lowered down to the vessel was because the eight survivors -

20 MS. BURER: Yeah?

21 MR. BEAN: -- not getting in the basket.

22 MS. BURER: Okay. Do you know why the captain,
23 when you guys were waiting there for those estimated couple
24 of hours for the helicopter to come back and pick you and the
25 captain of the vessel up, there was talk about an emergency

1 suit? Is there any particular reason why he chose not to put
2 one on?

3 MR. BEAN: I did ask the Captain why he wasn't
4 wearing his emergency suit and his suit was inside of one of
5 his larger life rafts on the opposite side of the vessel.

6 MS. BURER: So even though you guys were waiting to
7 be picked up, it would have been -- what was the reason why
8 he didn't get it even though he was on the opposite side of
9 the vessel?

10 MR. BEAN: The decks of the ship were not safe to
11 pass. Like I -- like I told you, the vessel split in half
12 while we were standing on it.

13 MS. BURER: Right. When the helicopter went down,
14 did you actually witness that?

15 MR. BEAN: Yes ma'am.

16 MS. BURER: Can you tell me about that particular
17 incident of what you saw?

18 MR. BEAN: When I was motioning for the very last
19 survivor, the eighth person, the master of the vessel, a wave
20 had hit the side of the Selendang Ayu right off the portside
21 bow and the waves didn't come over the side of the ship.
22 There had been waves hitting the ship all day long and they
23 all had been coming over the side of the ship. I know that
24 because I was washed around the deck by one wave that came
25 over the side, so this wave hit the side and it went straight

1 up, it didn't come over the vessel. I saw a wall of water
2 and I heard what is under investigation to be a power loss in
3 the helicopter and then I saw the helicopter move forward and
4 down and when it went below the Selendang Ayu, when it went
5 below the decks, or when it went below the freeboard the main
6 rotor system made contact with the very outside edge of the
7 Selendang Ayu and then the helicopter set over the water.

8 MS. BURER: Okay. And when the helicopter had the
9 mishap, were you able to actually see for yourself any, I
10 believe you guys call "targets" in seas?

11 MR. BEAN: I was not targeting anything in the
12 water, no, ma'am. My focus was on myself and the master of
13 the vessel.

14 MS. BURER: Okay, so you actually did not see
15 anyone. Did you witness the other people actually being
16 picked up then?

17 MR. BEAN: Oh yes. Like I said, I did notice that
18 the H65 crew had their basket lowered immediately --

19 MS. BURER: Right.

20 MR. BEAN: And I was not paying much attention to
21 what was going on, but I did see one survivor being hoisted
22 and I could see the retro reflected tape over the helmet of
23 the crew members.

24 MS. BURER: Okay.

25 MR. BEAN: And saw the helicopter inverted,

1 floating in the water.

2 MS. BURER: Okay. Did you personally have any kind
3 of debriefing at all after you got back?

4 MR. BEAN: Yes, ma'am, I have.

5 MS. BURER: Okay, and the rest of the crew also?

6 MR. BEAN: Yes, ma'am.

7 MS. BURER: Okay. For right now, I don't have
8 questions. Roddy?

9 MR. CORR: I just have one regarding the ship
10 breakup. This is Chief Foreign Officer Corr. Can you give
11 me an indication of when that occurred and describe what you
12 saw when that occurred or what you heard when that occurred?

13 MR. BEAN: Yes sir. It happened within a matter of
14 minutes. I had asked the master of the vessel what would
15 happen if -- if the ship came off ground and he said that
16 ship would break one of two ways. He described two ways to
17 me. While we were standing on the -- on the bow of the
18 vessel, a wave did get to hit the bow and there was a very --
19 very loud boom and it was just one noise, one boom and
20 moments later the power on the bow of the vessel went out.
21 There was still power in the aft, like you know pilothouse
22 area, but the power on our side of the vessel went out. I
23 asked the mater did we lose power and he said the ship was
24 breaking and then again moments later I looked aft towards
25 the pilothouse and I saw the back of the boat. It was -- it

1 was just -- it was bent like 35 degrees off. It was not in a
2 straight line anymore. And then again it happened all about
3 two minutes apart and it took about 10 minutes, but then the
4 vessel did separate, it did part. There was no loud like
5 crumpling noises, it was the sound of heavy seas hitting the
6 ship on the rocks and one loud kaboom and we lost the
7 electricity on half of the vessel. That's the way --

8 MR. CORR: Thanks right there. Thank you. I
9 really don't have any further questions.

10 MR. BURER: Okay. Aaron, do you mind describing to
11 me a little bit or at least give me some better idea as far
12 as the cable that you guys use to lower the basket and the
13 basket itself?

14 MR. BEAN: I don't, I think there would be better
15 people to answer that question. My job is to maintain the
16 survival equipment, like the basket. I don't really work on
17 maintaining the hoist cable.

18 MS. BURER: Do you know how long the hoist cable
19 is?

20 MR. BEAN: 240 -- or 220 feet of usable cable if
21 used at a 250 feet per minute and the flight mechanic, the
22 copilot and the pilot can all control it.

23 MS. BURER: Okay.

24 MR. BEAN: With variable speed. But, I have -- I
25 don't have any control over that -- that hoist.

1 MS. BURER: Okay.

2 MR. BEAN: And myself hanging from it most of the
3 time.

4 MS. BURER: Right. And the basket -- how large is
5 the basket?

6 MR. BEAN: The basket is large enough for one
7 survivor. It is strong enough to hold 600 pounds. It is a
8 multi-jointed rescue basket with two floatation bales on it
9 so it floats in the water. It has retroreflective tape
10 around the bale and it is the Coast Guard primary rescue
11 device.

12 MS. BURER: Okay. Now as far as the inside of the
13 helicopter, where were all the rescuers, where were they
14 seated?

15 MR. BEAN: All the rescuers or the survivors?

16 MS. BURER: The survivors, excuse me, the
17 survivors.

18 MR. BEAN: Well -

19 MS. BURER: Or can you at least describe --

20 MR. BEAN: I don't know where they were all seated.
21 I was not in the airplane.

22 MS. BURER: Right. So how was it done with the
23 first batch that you picked up?

24 MR. BEAN: We configured the cabin for, to use as
25 space as possible. We removed our rescue litter, our G-

1 watering pumps and we cleaned up the cabin and we put the
2 troop seats down. There is troop seats that face inboard on
3 the helicopter.

4 MS. BURER: Okay.

5 MR. BEAN: So, there is -- there is two sets of
6 troop seats, two air crew members' seats and two pilots' seat
7 and there is room on the decks there.

8 MS. BURER: Okay.

9 MR. BEAN: It is -- it is a very large helicopter.

10 MS. BURER: Right, now. Can people be buckled in?
11 Like you use seat-belts or any of it?

12 MR. BEAN: Troop seats are equipped with the
13 aircraft safety restraints.

14 MS. BURER: Okay. And how often -- as far as your
15 own experience is concerned, how often do you guys do any
16 kind of training evolutions?

17 MR. BEAN: We do training evolutions everyday.

18 MS. BURER: Can you explain that little bit better?

19 MR. BEAN: Well, my training or would you like to
20 know what, whose training, I mean there, it is -- it is a
21 combination of people, there is a lot of training going on
22 here.

23 MS. BURER: Okay. What is your particular
24 training?

25 MR. BEAN: Daily workout at the gym. I work out

1 for two hours and then pool workouts two times a week. I
2 also am required to fly a certain numbers of hours every
3 month as are the pilots and the other aircrew members. I am
4 required to get quarterly minimum rescues, just mock rescues
5 where I would either free-fall or get lowered from the
6 helicopter and practice my rescue procedures. There is a lot
7 of training going on here.

8 MS. BURER: Okay. Do you guys also train with like
9 for example the Alex Haley? Other cutters or is it just
10 helicopters that you train with? Do you do a like --

11 MR. BEAN: I am not sure about the Coast Guard
12 cutter Alex Haley's training.

13 MS. BURER: No, no, no, but --

14 MR. BEAN: I can't answer that question.

15 MS. BURER: No, but as far as do you all train with
16 other cutters? Or is it strictly just helicopters, training
17 with helicopters?

18 OPERATOR: Asking if you train with vessels as well
19 as --

20 MS. BURER: Right.

21 MR. BEAN: Our air stations yeah, we have our own
22 small boats that we practice with like with hoisting from the
23 small boats while they are underway or while they are dead in
24 the water and what not.

25 MS. BURER: Okay, so it is multi -- multi-unit

1 training, you guys do that then, basically?

2 MR. BEAN: Yes, ma'am.

3 MS. BURER: Okay. Okay, when did you start working
4 for the Coast Guard again?

5 MR. BEAN: February 27th, 2001.

6 MS. BURER: Okay. All right. I don't have any
7 more questions, I don't know if anyone else does.

8 MR. CORR: No I don't, but once we get off line, I
9 do have a couple of questions actually for you.

10 MS. BURER: Okay.

11 OPERATOR: Okay well if you don't need us any
12 further today, then we will sign off and feel free to contact
13 us if you need something else.

14 MS. BURER: Okay. I appreciate very much and thank
15 you Aaron, for your time and your patience.

16 MR. CORR: Thank you, Aaron.

17 MS. BURER: Bye-bye.

18 OPERATOR: Bye-bye.

19 MR. BEAN: Thank you.

20 MS. BURER: Bye, and this will conclude our
21 interview.

22

23

24

25

C E R T I F I C A T E

DEPOSITION SERVICES, INC., hereby certifies that the attached pages represent an accurate transcript of the electronic sound recording of the proceedings of the National Transportation Safety Board Interview regarding the grounding of the Selendang Ayu on December 21, 2004.

INTERVIEW OF USCG RESCUE SWIMMER:
AARON BEAN

Susan S.

Transcriber